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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
THE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND RESEARCH

AUD fm

30 September 1958

To: CIA - Mr. Allen W. Dulles
From: INR - Mr. R. Gordon Arneson *RGA*
Subject: Biography of Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov

Attached herewith are three copies of a biographic sketch of Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov prepared at your request sometime ago. The sketch is quite complete except for the item shown in footnote 1/ on page 4. On this we are asking for further field investigation and will let you know if anything further can usefully be added.

Attachments:

Three copies of biographic sketch.

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STATE review(s) completed.

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8 oct 58

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Mr. R. Gordon Arneson, Director
Intelligence and Research
Department of State
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Mr. Arneson:

I just want to let you know that I did receive the biographic sketch of Ivan Aleksandrovich Sarov which you were so good to send me. Many thanks.

With kindest personal regards.

Sincerely,

Signed

Allen W. Dulles
Director

O/DCI [redacted] dd 3 Oct 58

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Division of Biographic Information

SEROV, Ivan Aleksandrovich

U.S.S.R.

Ivan Aleksandrovich Serov was named in April 1954 Chairman of the newly formed Committee of State Security, thus becoming the senior secret police chief in the Soviet Union. In the post-Stalin era, both Khrushchev and Serov, in their own ways, have reflected the changing and the permanent features of the Soviet system. Reared in the age of Stalin and Beriya, they rose to high position, were close associates in the Ukraine, and, having survived politically and physically, adapted their respective professions to the requirements of a more sophisticated age. Discarding most of the pathological features of the Stalinist period, they did not alter the basic features of the Soviet system, nor could they escape their own personal responsibility for crimes of that period.

While aspects of the close personal relationship between Khrushchev and Serov are reminiscent of that between Stalin and his police chiefs, there are also notable differences. Serov is much more of a professional in his field and does not enjoy a Party rank commensurate with most of his predecessors. The Party, moreover, has gone to great pains to indicate that Serov will not be another Beriya and that the main function of the secret police at present is guarding against foreign influence or intrusions.

Serov has had a varied career which included mass deportation of civil populations, high-level intelligence and counter-intelligence operations, the management of forced labor construction projects, the establishment and supervision of satellite security services, and participation in Kremlin political intrigues. The public personality he displays today is self-assured, informal, and almost amiable. Serov makes frequent appearances at public functions and has been seen on the streets of Moscow, apparently unguarded, as well as in restaurants and at the theater. Observers testify to his vanity, extending both to the success he has made of himself and to his personal physical fitness; his appreciation of attractive women; and his heavy, sarcastic sense of humor. Serov, undoubtedly anti-Semitic, appears to have many racial prejudices; he has made references to Americans, Asiatics, and other nationalities in terms of broad, contemptuous generalizations. He describes himself as a sports enthusiast who enjoys skiing, skating, riding, ice hockey, and tennis. Others describe him as a capable organizer who is completely ruthless, with the professional, impersonal cruelty of a Spanish Inquisitor rather than of a sadist. At the same time Serov appears within the Marxist frame of reference to be something of a conservative in outlook; he respects tradition, is opposed to change, and expresses concern that his son "does not value our regime in the way that I do" and lacks principles, taking things for granted. His son,

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Vladimir, is about twenty five years old, an engineering officer in the Air Force; there is also a younger daughter, Svetlana, and a wife who has been described as a "battle-axe."

Ivan Serov was born in 1905, the son of a poor peasant in Vologda oblast'. He attended secondary school, became secretary of a local komsomol organization and in 1923, at the age of 18, was elected chairman of a rural district soviet. Serov soon enlisted in the Red Army, there joining the Party in 1926, and rose through the ranks to become, in 1935, chief of staff of an artillery regiment. It is reported that in 1932-33 he participated in his first forced transfer of population, resettling the Kuban' and Terek Cossacks to Siberia. Later, Serov attended the Frunze Military Academy; after completing the course, he "was directed to work in the NKVD," where, according to a Soviet biography, he was soon promoted to general."

In point of fact, the period until 1940, when Serov was officially listed as Commissar of Internal Affairs for the Ukrainian SSR, spanned a tumultuous era of bloody purges, intrigues, and conspiracies during the successive control of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs by Yagoda, Yezhov, and Beriya (the latter being appointed in 1938). The accuracy of the one available account of Serov's activities during this period cannot be vouched for, but it is worth repeating.

The political control of the NKVD is supposed to have been carried out through the Special Sector, headed by A.N. Poskrebyshev and created by Stalin, evidently in the summer of 1934, within his personal secretariat. Serov is supposed to have held a leading post in this body and to have taken a hand in preparing the "Yezhov Purge" of the Party and government apparatus. Later, when Yezhov became People's Commissar of Internal Affairs (1936) and the purge got under way, Serov was appointed chief of a special section within the Main Administration of State Security of the NKVD, with responsibility for providing support and services to the "Special Secret Political Branch for State Security." In this capacity he was closely associated with both Poskrebyshev and G.M. Malenkov, who in 1936 had become chief of the Central Committee Section for Leading Party Organs, with responsibility for selection of Party cadres and maintenance of personnel records. Serov's connections with Poskrebyshev and Malenkov are said to have saved him in 1938-39 when Yezhov was ousted and Beriya initiated a purge of Yezhov's followers. His survival may also have been the result of his absence from Moscow. One source alleges that Serov took part in the Spanish Civil War, returning home to take up duties as Deputy Commissar of Internal Affairs in the Ukrainian SSR.

Officially identified as People's Commissar for Internal Affairs in 1940, Serov was elected a member of the Ukrainian Party Central Committee (May 1940) and member of its Politburo, of which N.S. Khrushchev,

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D.S. Korotchenko¹, M.S. Grechukha², and L.R. Korniets³ were all members. The official recognition of Serov's stature indicated both the consolidation of his position and the fact of his service in the Ukraine. Serov appears to have assumed his duties there in 1938 (i.e., the year Khrushchev was appointed First Secretary of the Ukrainian Party), immediately following a period of most ruthless purges in the Ukrainian Party organization.

When Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the eastern portion of the country was occupied by Soviet troops and incorporated into the Ukrainian and Belorussian republics. Serov is described during this period as having played a major role in the mass liquidation and deportation of Polish officers and men taken prisoner by the Russians. On April 26, 1940, Serov received the Order of Lenin, presumably for services rendered in the Ukraine and during the Polish operation. In this connection one incident related by the Polish General Anders is of considerable interest in suggesting that at this early date Serov may already have had some responsibility for political affairs in Poland. According to Anders, a General Ivanov repeatedly offered him a post late in 1940 in a projected Polish government then being considered by Soviet authorities for the portion of Poland under Soviet occupation. When, at a later date, Serov exercised broad powers in Poland, he used the pseudonym "General Ivanov."

Serov's next assignment consisted of the "Sovietization" of the three Baltic states (1940-41). Serov, then Acting People's Commissar for State Security of the USSR with the personal rank of Commissar of State Security, 3rd rank, is reported to have organized the initial phase of infiltration and provocation, and subsequently managed the program of mass deportations. He was the author of the notorious Order No. 001223 containing detailed directions for the arrest and deportation of anti-Soviet elements from Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. When the war started, Serov is said to have performed similar functions among old German settlers along the Volga, as chairman of a Commission on the Liquidation of the Volga German ASSR.

At the 18th All-Union Party Conference in February 1941, Serov was elevated to candidate membership on the Party Central Committee, becoming in the same week First Deputy People's Commissar of State Security (NKGB), under Beriya's close associate, V.N. Merkulov. When this commissariat was merged into the Commissariat of Internal Affairs in July 1941, Serov was retained as Deputy Commissar. He served again as Merkulov's deputy when the NKGB was reseparated from the NKVD in April 1943. In March 1944, Serov was listed with the rank of Commissar of State Security, 2nd rank--a grade equivalent to that of a Soviet Lieutenant-General (a two-star rank).

- 1/ D.S. Korotchenko: presently candidate member, CC CPSU; member of presidium, CC Ukrainian CP; Deputy Chairman, USSR Supreme Soviet; and Chairman, Ukrainian Supreme Soviet.
- 2/ M.S. Grechukha: presently member of presidium, CC Ukrainian CP, and First Deputy Minister, Ukrainian Council of Ministers.
- 3/ L.R. Korniets: presently USSR Minister of Grain Products.

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Serov's activities during World War II are far from clear.

According to an official Soviet biography, Serov participated in the defense of Moscow in 1941 and of Stalingrad in 1942, where he supervised the evacuation of industrial enterprises; he then took part in the offensive which drove the Germans out of the Caucasus, and later participated in the siege and capture of Berlin, where he remained when the war ended. This account conceals more than it reveals. At some point during the war, Serov is said to have received a high post with Smersh, an NKVD organization with counter-intelligence and security functions in the Armed Forces. One report states that at the beginning of the war Serov was appointed political adviser to one of the marshals commanding an Army Group at the front. The reference to the Caucasus in the Soviet biography is supplemented by firm evidence that during the period November 1943 to March 1944 Serov directed the mass deportations to Central Asia of the Chechen-Ingush and other Caucasian minority groups which had been guilty of collaborating with the Germans. As Soviet troops moved forward in 1943-44, Serov applied similar policies to other cases of mass defection, including the Kalmyks and Crimean Tartars.

When Soviet troops entered Polish territory during the closing phases of the war, the question of the composition and political orientation of the postwar Polish government immediately assumed great importance. In the end, Soviet policy prevailed. Poland became a People's Republic, closely controlled by Soviet officials and with a political organization patterned after the Soviet model. During the critical period in 1944 and 1945, when Poland was being transformed into a Soviet satellite, Serov is reliably reported to have directed Soviet intelligence and counter-intelligence activities in Poland, with the added responsibility of setting up the Polish Ministry of Public Security and acting as adviser to its minister, General Stanislaw Radkiewicz. In performing his duties, Serov used the pseudonym "General Ivanov," and possibly "General Malinov" as well¹. According to Mikolajczyk², Stypulkowski³, Anders⁴, and official statements of the Polish Government in London⁵, the sixteen Polish underground leaders who came forward in March 1945 to negotiate with Soviet authorities concerning the formation of a Polish government, had done so in response to an invitation and guarantee of safe conduct issued on behalf of a General Ivanov. Of the sixteen Poles

- 1/ Serov's role in Poland and the identity of Malinov and Ivanov may be clarified as a result of a field investigation presently under way.
- 2/ Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, The Pattern of Soviet Domination, 1948.
- 3/ Z. Stypulkowski, Invitation to Moscow, 1951.
- 4/ W. Anders, An Army in Exile, 1949; interview in Washington Evening Star, August 26, 1956.
- 5/ The Polish Review, Vol. V, No. 17, May 17, 1945.

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who were arrested after presenting themselves to General Ivanov in the suburbs of Warsaw, only Stypulkowski has survived to tell the story. It might be noted at this point that if the Ivanov who double-crossed the Poles was, indeed, Serov, then in that episode his role was strikingly similar to that he played during the Hungarian revolt in November 1956, when he interrupted the negotiations in Budapest between Hungarian officials and the Soviet Military Command for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, and ordered the arrest of the Hungarian delegation.

For his services in the war, Serov received the Order of Suvorov, 1st class, and the Order of Kutuzov, 1st class. These awards were followed in May 1945 by his second Order of Lenin, a Gold Star Medal, and the title Hero of the Soviet Union.

In June 1945 Serov was transferred to Germany, where, promoted to Colonel-General, he served as Deputy Chief for Civil Administration of the Soviet Military Administration (SMAG), first under Marshal G.K. Zhukov, and thereafter under his successor, V.D. Sokolovskiy. As chief of intelligence and security operations in the Soviet zone of Germany, Serov is said to have organized the repatriation of Soviet displaced persons and prisoners-of-war, collected German scientists and data on guided missiles and atomic research, and provided forced labor to operate East German uranium mines. He is also reported to have had differences with Zhukov, who resented his counter-intelligence work among the armed forces as well as the semi-independent status of the MVD and MGB within Zhukov's military command. Serov contributed to the situation by sending adverse reports on Zhukov through security channels to Stalin. During the period in Germany, so goes the story, Serov also established himself with Stalin through his protection of Stalin's son Vasili.

Beyond the bare record of appointments to official posts, very little is available on Serov after 1947, the year he apparently left Germany. It is characteristic of the uncertainty surrounding his movements that one source reports Serov's German assignment to have lasted until 1950--the year when a Ministry of State Security was established within the German People's Republic. Another source states that Serov remained in Berlin but a short time, returning to the USSR to take charge of intelligence concerning atomic energy. Mikolajczyk, on the other hand, has described a General Malinov--a powerful, albeit, shadowy, figure said to be Serov--who in 1948 exercised authority in Poland superior to that of the Soviet Ambassador. Malinov had also been identified in Poland in 1945, in terms accurately descriptive of Serov's role in Poland prior to his German assignment. In view of the conflicting chronology and the uncertain identity of General Malinov, this problem must remain unresolved until additional facts come to light.

Serov, in any case, was confirmed Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs in April 1946 (shortly after the replacement of L.P. Beriya by S.N. Kruglov as Minister), and promoted to First Deputy Minister a year later, in February 1947. The only official indication of what Serov did during the

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many years he virtually dropped out of sight is found in the announcement on September 20, 1952, that he, Kruglov, and two other MVD officials received the Order of Lenin for work on the Volga-Don Canal. This project was supervised by the MVD and built by forced labor. A possible explanation for the transfer of Serov to the NKVD (MVD) and the paucity of information on him during this period is the fact that V.S. Abakumov had taken over the NKGB (MGB) in 1946 and Serov consequently may have had to leave secret police work shortly thereafter. Serov subsequently made disparaging remarks about Abakumov, indicating that there may have been friction between the two. Equally obscure is Serov's status during the organizational and personnel changes following the death of Stalin. At that time, the MGB was merged into the MVD and Beriya returned briefly to head the combined Ministry (March-June 1953), only to be purged and replaced again by Kruglov. When the Committee of State Security, attached to the USSR Council of Ministers, was formed in March 1954, Serov was installed as chairman, a position he still holds.

According to reports received during 1954, Serov at that time was directing foreign intelligence operations, both while serving in the MVD and following his new appointment. Operating from headquarters in Karlshorst, he is said to have organized a campaign to lure key Western scientists and officials to the East, and is credited with the defection in July 1954 of Otto John, West Germany's security chief. In December 1954, Serov was awarded the Order of Red Banner. The most widely publicized coup staged by Serov took place in November 1956 during the Hungarian revolution, when he violated a safe conduct given a Hungarian government delegation by the Soviet Military Command during negotiations for the withdrawal of Soviet troops; later, when the revolt was crushed, he helped Kadar reestablish control. Unconfirmed reports state that Serov also planned the subversion of Jordan and Syria during the summer of 1957, although the rumor of his presence in Damascus at the time is probably incorrect.

The most recent period of Serov's career, though it began in the era of collective leadership, has been shaped under the beneficent influence of Nikita Khrushchev. Evidence of the close relationship existing between the two men is to be found in Serov's own statements, the honors bestowed on Serov in recent years, the responsibility assumed by Serov in providing security arrangements during Khrushchev's travels abroad, and, finally, in the role played by Serov in Khrushchev's elimination of rivals. Their behavior when observed together is that of close personal friends.

Serov travelled with Khrushchev to the Geneva Conference in July 1955, and accompanied Khrushchev and Bulganin on their tour of Southeast Asia late in 1955. In March of the following year he preceded them to England to prepare security measures, only to encounter a barrage of criticism, to the obvious embarrassment of Soviet Embassy officials in London. He apparently took no measures to protect Malenkov, whose visit to England coincided with his own, and in fact professed total indifference to what Malenkov was doing. Serov showed a professional respect for the efficiency of British security measures, in contrast to his earlier outspoken